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THE WAR

ITS CAUSES AND ISSUES

THREE ADDRESSES GIVEN IN SHEFFIELD ON AUG. 31, SEPT. 1, AND SEPT. 2, 1914

BY

H. A. L. FISHER

VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY

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PREFACE.

Some members of my audience have urged me to publish these addresses—the first to be given in Sheffield upon the present crisis. Spoken as they were in the midst of many duties and preoccupations arising out of the war, they make no pretence to historical fulness or recondite knowledge. They were for the most part delivered extempore, and I have found some little difficulty, despite the aid of the reports published in the "Sheffield Daily Telegraph," in preparing them for publication, and indeed am fully conscious that, owing to the capricious operation of a defective memory, many passages have been lost beyond recall. For these and other sins I crave the indulgence of my audience, and of any other readers who may be attracted to these pages.

H. F.

I.

If our Empire has the courage to follow an independent colonial policy with determination, a collision of our interests with those of England is inevitable. It was natural and logical that the new great Power in Central Europe should be compelled to settle affairs with all great Powers. We have settled our accounts with Austria-Hungary, with France, with Russia. The last settlement, the settlement with England, will probably be the lengthiest and the most difficult.—TREITSCHKE.

A FAMOUS master of epigram has said that the British Empire was won in a fit of absence of mind. And it is true enough that in acquiring possessions across the seas we "builded better than we knew". It is, however, equally accordant with the facts of history to lay stress upon the conscious side of the expansion of England, and, making abstraction of Australasia, to view our Empire as the result of a series of struggles, first against Spain, then against Holland and France, struggles connected very closely with the balance of power in Europe, with dynastic aims and long diplomatic traditions, and carried far beyond the original theatre of European warfare to the most opposite quarters of the globe.

We are now engaged with a power greater than the Spain of Philip II, greater than the Holland of Ruyter and Tromp, greater even than the Empires of Louis XIV and Napoleon; and when I say that Germany is greater than any of these powers, I am not merely thinking of material greatness, of the strength of the German army and navy, and of the tremendous equipment of deadly weapons which German policy has accumulated for the terror of mankind; I am thinking of social and moral factors as well, of the burning patriotism of the Germans, of their devotion to duty, of their wholesome family life, of the undeviating and concentrated purpose which informs their political action, of their exact aptitude for business, of the great imaginative and artistic powers which for three centuries have given them the unchallenged mastery in the domain of European music, of the disinterested love of knowledge which has earned for German Universities the respect of the whole learned world.

It would be the worst of errors to belittle such an enemy and no belittling words shall fall from my lips. I am the last man to draw up an indictment against a whole people of whose contributions to the great causes of humanity I am keenly sensible, whose poetry I read and love, of whose great masters of historical learning I count myself to be in some measure the humble disciple. I can take no pleasure in contemplating the ruin of any civilized country under the barbaric processes of war, and in this struggle between two great members of the Teutonic family there is to me something fratricidal and therefore peculiarly terrible.

Nevertheless, while holding these views as strongly as it is possible to hold them, I intend to make clear to you my conviction that we were in honour and duty bound to enter upon this war, that we can wage it with a clear conscience, and that we must see it through to the bitter end, even though the process will necessarily demand great and continued sacrifices from the whole community, the full measure of which it is impossible to forecast.

To the great mass of the British population this war came as a complete surprise—a bolt from the blue. If our minds were not absorbed in delightful plans for our summer holiday, we were thinking of the Irish question, now suddenly fallen from its great estate, and nothing was certainly further removed from our expectations than that in the twinkling of an eye we should be involved in a gigantic European struggle arising out of a squabble about Servia, a country which some of us might find difficulty in placing on the map. We were suddenly apprised that Austria had issued an ultimatum to Servia; then we learnt that Russia was mobilizing, that Germany had declared war on Russia and France, and finally that we too were dragged into the Titanic struggle. The die was cast before we had time to take breath. From the first issue of the Austrian note to Servia on 23 July to our declaration of war upon Germany on 4 August, there was only an interval of eleven days. The fate of Europe, perhaps of the whole world, hung or appeared to hang on the hurried negotiations of the small knot of anxious, surprised, and excited men who controlled the diplomacy of the Great Powers. We were tempted to ask whether the statesmanship of Europe was bankrupt, or whether whole nations, as Bishop Butler suspected, could go mad like individuals.

Now for the right understanding of these extraordinary events it is first necessary to comprehend the leading actor in the drama. We must know something of Germany, and in particular something of the political mind of Germany, of the general framework over which the web and woof of her aspirations is spread, and of the conception which she has formed of her historic mission. In every nation there are many centres of life and interest—there is the world of business, of art, of pleasure, of religion, of public charity, and so forth, and the opinions and feelings which cluster round these different centres may be as infinitely various as you will,—but for the student of politics the one thing relevant is the political philosophy of a people, or rather that part of it which exercises an energetic influence upon the course of the government.

What is this philosophy, what are these ideas in Germany? We may summarize the philosophy and enumerate the ideas under three heads—the sacred virtue of war, the non-existence of obligations conflicting with the material interest of the Fatherland, the God-given imperial mission of Germany to control the world.

Prussia has been made by the sword. That is one of the unalterable facts of history graven upon the mind of every German schoolboy, and shaping his whole outlook on the world. A flat, dull, monotonous, sandy plain, with few graces of scenery, and no strong natural frontiers, has been hammered into a nation by the force of an army. Denied a mountain barrier by nature, Prussia has created it for herself in a wall of men. And as Frederick the Great made Prussia by the sword, so was Germany united under the rule of Prussia by the three wars against Denmark, Austria, and France, which were contrived by the diplomacy of Bismarck and executed by the armies of Moltke and Von Roon.

"The industry of Prussia," said Voltaire in the middle of the eighteenth century, "is war;" and under the compulsion of Prussia war is now the common industry of the whole German people. It is pursued with a passion of which we here have little notion. How many of us in this room have ever read a serious treatise on tactics or strategy? But in Germany, where every citizen is a soldier, some seven hundred volumes on the military art are turned out every year from the printing press. Whereas young Englishmen read articles on golf or cricket or bridge, the young German reads books on war. And whereas we regard war as a great calamity, an

evil which ought, if possible, to be rooted out of society, the general view in Germany is quite otherwise. There war is regarded as the supreme test of national and personal excellence, as the necessary ordeal through which every nation must pass if it wishes to rise to higher things. "It is a business," said Luther, "divine in itself and as needful and necessary in the world as eating or drinking or any other work." And in the same spirit General Bernhardi, the latest and perhaps the ablest expositor of the practical aims of Germany, writes as follows: "The wish for culture in a healthy nation must express itself in terms of the wish for political power, and the foremost duty of statesmanship is to obtain, safeguard, and promote this power by force of arms in the last resort. Thus the first and most essential duty of a great civilized nation is to prepare for war on a scale commensurate with its political needs."

The advocates of this military ideal do not conceal from themselves the brutality of war. The more brutal the campaign the speedier the victory. Thus we must not expect the German army to exhibit fine scruples in the conduct of their military operations. It will be obedient to discipline, it will in general abstain from wanton and purposeless barbarities, and may, at the final reckoning, have fewer isolated atrocities down to its account than would be the case with a force less powerfully controlled.[1] But whenever it may be judged expedient to strike terror into a civilian population, the German army will be commanded to perpetrate barbarities, and the German public will applaud them. Who of us here, in this University Hall, can reflect without a shudder upon the terrible fate which has overtaken the ancient and illustrious fane of learning among the Belgian people? Who is there among us who, hearing of the wreck of Louvain, does not burn to avenge the wrongs of that small, gallant, and unoffending nation who has not only sustained the first furies of the German attack but endured also the calculated atrocities of a ruthless and inhuman theory of war? All war is prolific of barbarity. The best troops in the red fury of combat or in the desperation of defeat may sin against the rules of military chivalry. But German barbarity is part of a system, recommended from the study table of the theorist and practised out of a misguided sense of military obligation. The most distinguished German

[1] It seems almost too certain that this favourable estimate, based on the record of the German army in the Franco-Prussian War, will have to be revised.

writer on the military career of Napoleon defends the murder of prisoners, who had surrendered on the express condition that their lives were to be saved, on the ground that they would have been dangerous if released and burdensome if retained. The casuistry of barbarism can go no further.

No man can do more than lay down his life for his country, and German patriotism holds that no man can do less. The Fatherland may at any moment command her sons to die, and it is not for the individual to challenge the decree. On the same ground of exclusive devotion to the State, it is held to be a sacred duty to violate engagements with other countries however solemnly and recently made. Nobody who has read German history or had much conversation with Germans on public affairs was surprised by the recent violation of the guaranteed neutrality of Belgium, seeing that ever since the days of Frederick the Great, who in the matter of political perfidy set a standard which it is difficult to match, the breaking of treaties in the interests of the State has been held by all Prussian historians to be a righteous and proper act.

The political morality of a country is largely shaped by its political admirations, and Germany has been unfortunate in its national heroes. I well remember how surprised I used to be to find among my fellow-students at Göttingen men of amiable character and of the most scrupulous honour in private life, who would yet hold this cynical, and, as I think, outrageous view of public morality. Discussing the policy of Frederick the Great, the most humane and gentle of mortals would contend that the augmentation of the Prussian State excused any perfidy and violence, and that no statesman has any right to respect a treaty the moment after its observance has begun to inconvenience his country. The two architects of modern Germany, Frederick the Great and Bismarck, are perhaps chiefly responsible for this deplorable attitude of German public opinion in the matter of international good faith. And perhaps we need feel no surprise if German patriots do not stint their admiration for the giants whose heroic labours have fashioned a mighty state. Nevertheless it has been an incalculable misfortune for humanity that the giants were men who could not afford to be honest, for hence it comes about that we are now confronted with millions of educated men who are still the slaves of a barbaric statecraft.

But the present political situation is unintelligible unless

we take account of a third factor in the political consciousness of Germany—the deep and prevalent belief in a great imperial destiny to be hereafter accomplished by the German people under the special guidance of God and of His appointed ministers of the Hohenzollern House.

All the great Prussian teachers of history who have principally contributed to form the political mind of modern Germany unite in preaching the doctrine of the historic mission of their country. They point out how fourteen hundred years ago the Germans suddenly broke into the sunlight of history from their ancient forests and violently destroyed the famous fabric of the Roman Empire, how later on Charlemagne and the Ottos and the Franconians and the Hohenstauffen exercised Imperial rights over Western Europe, how the Habsburgs, a family of Germanic stock, took up the mantle of Empire in the thirteenth century and afterwards came to rule half of civilized Europe from Vienna, Brussels, and Madrid, and how at the Reformation the religious genius of Germany refashioned the creeds of Europe. The period of internal struggle and political eclipse which succeeded the preaching of Luther does not dash the confidence of the patriotic fatalist. He argues that while other states conquered colonies, the triumphs of Germany were in the sphere of spirit, and that just because Germans were helping to mould first the religion and then the philosophy of Europe, their land was buffeted and distracted, the prey of foreign invasion and internal discord, weak, divided against itself, of no account in the political balances of the world. Now, however, Providence has begun to reveal the far-reaching arm of her benevolent compensations, and Germany, the last of the Great Powers to attain to political strength and unity, has already shown the world some measure of her imperial spirit.

What then remains for her to accomplish? She is already in her own esteem the leader of European culture and knowledge, by far the strongest military power on the Continent, and second only to England in her marine. But this is not sufficient. Germany aims at *Weltherrschaft* or the leadership of the world. As General Bernhardi puts it with his splendid and brutal honesty, it is a case of *Weltmacht oder Niedergang*, of World-power or Downfall. Such are the stakes in the game, and if Germany persists in calling *Weltmacht*, then England is regretfully bound to answer *Niedergang*.

It is this imperial ambition in Germany which has neces-

sarily brought her publicists and statesmen to view Great Britain not as a natural ally but as a predestined foe. I do not imply that Germany wished to pick a quarrel with us at this juncture, or that our entrance into the struggle has not been a grievous blow to her, a reversal of expectations and a sudden shattering of the diplomatic attempts pursued by the present German Chancellor during the past two years to improve the relations between the two countries. Nor yet would I deny the existence in Germany of a large number of moderate and enlightened persons who on grounds of sympathy and public interest desired to keep the peace with England. But that the most formidable and influential body of German opinion regards the British Empire as its prospective prey is a matter about which there can be no measure of doubt whatever.

After all, can we wonder? The patriotic German still drunk with the triumphs of 1870, conscious that his country has an imperial past, aware that the German population grows at the rate of nearly a million a year, looks out upon the world and finds everywhere British colonies, British coaling stations, and floating over a fifth of the globe the British flag. Can we wonder that in Prince von Bülow's famous words he too wishes for "a place in the sun"—"wishes" is a faint word—that he conceives it to be part of the duty of German statesmanship to conquer that place for the German people, if not by diplomacy then by the rude shock of arms?

And much as he may admire the characteristics of individual Englishmen and acknowledge the maturity of our political experience and skill, the German holds that our Empire is a robber Empire, an Empire which, having been won mainly by craft when the world was asleep, does not correspond to the vital power of Great Britain to defend it. And he is inclined to regard us, because he has often been told that it is so, as a declining race, recruited from the scum of the European populations, bent on pleasure, unmartial, dedicated to comfort and selfishness, because we are already sated with more plunder than we can digest. And so when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, upon taking office in 1906, reduced the rate of our naval expenditure in order to abate the political tension between the two countries, the Germans responded by increasing theirs until the Navy Act of 1910 in Sir Edward Grey's well-measured words made provision for the construction of a fleet "greater than any in existence". This naval

programme was to have been completed in 1918, and it was important for Germany to preserve peace with England at least until that date, by which time she might have settled her accounts with Russia and France.

For it must be remembered that the systematic and provident genius of Germany plans long ahead and on a great scale. Prince von Bülow, in his illuminating volume on Imperial Germany, now to be read in an English translation, speaks with some sense of discomfort and reproval of the inveterate tendency of every parliamentary group in the Reichstag to frame a philosophy of the world and to assess every practical proposal in the light of the widest principle. But this habit, which may only be a source of inconvenient obstruction in parliamentary business, is terribly dangerous in the sphere of foreign policy. It leads to the posing of such insane and reckless alternatives as General Bernhardi's World-dominion or Destruction, and to ideals of progressive military aggrandisement only to be realized through the havoc of the civilized world.

The Teutophobe organs in England have a way of making out that the exclusive purpose of the German fleet is the destruction of this country. To this the Germans reply that an expanding commerce requires battleships to guard it, and that they have more reason to apprehend aggression from our side than we have to fear a descent of the Potsdam guards on the coast of Essex. Nevertheless, there is certainly strong ground for British apprehensions in the circumstances which gave rise to the first great German Navy Bill in 1900. It was, as you will remember, the time of the Boer War, when feeling was violently moved both in England and Germany, and great mutual exasperation was shown in the press of both countries. Germany would have gladly intervened on the side of the Boers, but for lack of a military marine to back it her diplomacy was powerless to affect the course of events. The Kaiser at least was under no illusions as to the significance of the lesson which he had received. "Our future," he declared, "lies upon the waters;" and he indicated the political idea in his mind when he said, "Germany needs a Navy of such strength, that a war even against the mightiest naval power would involve risks threatening the supremacy of that power".

Ever since that day British statesmen have noted with growing concern the prodigious naval preparations of their German rivals, the fortifications at Wilhelmshaven and Heligo-

land, the provision for transports at Emden, the continuous and rapid augmentation of expenditure on battleships. And so it became a matter of almost vital necessity for a country faced with the possibility of such a foe as Germany to clear the ground so far as might be of diplomatic embarrassments with other countries. Accordingly an understanding was entered into first (1904) with France and then (1907) with Russia. These understandings, be it observed, involved this country in no pledge to engage upon a war, either defensive or offensive, against Germany. Whatever may be the sympathies of private individuals, Great Britain has no interest in helping France to reconquer Alsace-Lorraine or in promoting the advance of Russia to the Vistula. Upon such issues taken by themselves it would have been a crime to commit this country to a war with Germany. Nor would Great Britain have ever consented to embark in a war of aggression against the German Empire. But though it was plainly understood that we would never assist in an aggressive design upon Germany, some private conversations took place between English and French military men as to the manner in which this country might render most effective assistance to France in the event of a German invasion of that country. And in view of the rapid and alarming progress of the German Navy, it was thought necessary that the main body of the British fleet should be concentrated in home waters, while the policing of the Mediterranean was left to the French.

Such then was the general situation before the Servian crisis set the world afire—the Powers of Europe armed and suspicious, Germany leagued with Austria, supreme on land and rapidly preparing to become supreme on sea, France offensively and defensively tied to Russia, Great Britain suspicious of Germany but not formally bound to assist her foes against her, though in the event of a war between Germany and France, she was, owing to her naval dispositions, committed in honour to ask of Germany that she should forego her belligerent rights in the British Channel. The situation was uneasy, for though France and England were anxious for peace, the tides of passion were mounting in Austria and Russia, and it was the military opinion in Germany that the hour for a successful and decisive war was about to strike.

II.

Do not let us forget the civilizing task which the decrees of Providence have assigned to us. Just as Prussia was destined to be the nucleus of Germany, so the regenerated Germany shall be the nucleus of a future Empire of the West. And in order that no one shall be left in doubt, we proclaim from henceforth that our Continental nation has a right to the sea, not only to the North Sea, but to the Mediterranean and Atlantic. Hence we intend to absorb one after another all the provinces which neighbour on Prussia. We will successively annex Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Northern Switzerland, then Trieste and Venice, finally Northern France from the Sambre to the Loire. This programme we fearlessly pronounce. It is not the work of a madman. The Empire we intend to found will be no Utopia. We have ready to our hands the means of founding it and no coalition in the world can stop us.—BRONSART VON SCHELLENDORF.

ON the evening of 29 June last, the world was stunned by the intelligence of a double murder, in all its circumstances most tragical and significant. The Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir-apparent of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and his wife the Duchess of Hohenberg, while visiting the town of Serajevo in Bosnia were shot down and killed by a gang of assassins, who earlier in the same day had attempted to destroy them with bombs. The high station of the Archduke, the hopes which had been legitimately built upon his strong character and progressive views, not to speak of the many tragedies which had recently darkened the annals of the Imperial House, would have sufficed to secure for Austria the sympathy of the whole world in this terrible misfortune. And the crime was rendered the more startling by the fact that the murdered Archduke was known to be sympathetic with the Southern Slavs of the Austrian Empire, in the midst of whom he and his wife were done to death.

A magisterial investigation was ordered by the Austrian Government into the circumstances of the crime, and it was proved, or reported to be proved, that the assassination was planned in Belgrade, the capital of Servia, that the arms and explosives with which the murderers were provided had been supplied by Servian officers and functionaries, and finally that the passage into Bosnia of the criminals and their arms was

organized and effected by the chiefs of the Servian frontier police. In other words, the Austrian Government came to the conclusion that this double murder was part of a political propaganda, originating in the Servian capital, assisted by some minor agents of the Servian Government, and having for its object the alienation of the South Slavonic provinces of the Empire and their incorporation in an enlarged Servian kingdom. To the Serb propagandists the Archduke would be peculiarly dangerous, if it were really true that he favoured some generous scheme of Home Rule for the Southern Slavs of the Austrian Empire.

For six years the Austrian Government had been on the brink of war with Servia, and now the cup of its wrath was full to overflowing. To the Austrian eye this restless, ambitious, warlike little State, whose monarch had been raised to the throne by two shocking assassinations, seemed to be properly marked out for condign punishment. And having come to an understanding with Germany that she might have a free hand with her neighbour, Austria sent a note to Servia directly intended to lead to war. Even if we have not read the note, which, however, is very accessible since it is printed in the White Paper, we may judge of its character from the language of Sir Edward Grey, a master of moderate statement, who told our Ambassador at Vienna that he "had never before seen one State address to another a document of so formidable a character". It contained demands which no self-respecting Government could possibly accept, and which Austria, imposing a time-limit of forty-eight hours, did not expect to be accepted.

Now, however keen our sympathies may be for the aged ruler of Austria, and for the Austrian people in their natural indignation at the Serajevo crime—and the respectful sympathy of our two Houses of Parliament was conveyed to the stricken Emperor in language of eloquent and unmistakable sincerity—we must admit that it was a somewhat strong measure upon the result of a short magisterial inquiry, incriminating some minor officials in a neighbouring State, to address an ultimatum, for such was the true character of the Austrian note, to the Government of that State. And we are the less inclined to approve of the procedure when we reflect that the hectoring epistle of 23 July was addressed by a very large and strong Power to a small State, which had hardly begun to draw breath after an exhausting war. Yet in spite of its

peremptory and unparalleled insolence, the Austrian note was not rejected by Servia. On the contrary, the Servian Government consented to do almost everything which Austria required—to condemn all propaganda directed against Austria-Hungary, to introduce a press law providing severe punishment for incitement to hatred and contempt of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, to suppress certain intriguing societies, to dismiss officers found to be guilty of acts directed against the integrity of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, to open an inquiry into the conduct of persons implicated in the plot against the Archduke, to extend the measures taken to prevent the illicit traffic of arms and explosives across the frontier. There was not any humiliation which Servia was not prepared to undergo to escape a war with Austria save one.

She would not surrender her independence. To the demand that she should accept the collaboration of Austrian police and Austrian judges, she replied in the negative, adding, however, that she was prepared to submit these points to the decision either of the Hague Tribunal or of the Great Powers.

Now in face of this Servian reply to the Austrian note, what was the duty of Austria and what was the duty of Austria's ally at Berlin? Was it not their duty to say to Servia, "We accept your humiliation," for the Servian answer spelt humiliation, "and we are content, if not to refer the two points left in dispute to the Hague, or the Powers, at least to allow them to be the subject-matter of further negotiation"? Had there been any sincere desire for peace on the part of Austria and Germany, who can doubt but that the Servian reply might have been made the basis of conversations leading to a peaceful issue?

Now we Englishmen have no interest in this Servian imbroglio and very little substantial knowledge of the fierce play of passion and intrigue which make up the political life of a Balkan state. Our natural tendency is to side with the pigmy who is menaced by the giant, but we are at the same time ready to believe that the giant may have been acting under a natural and legitimate sense of provocation. So we do not in the present state of our knowledge quarrel with the German Powers because they were indignant with Servia. We know too little to pronounce. Our gravamen against them is that they were resolved upon a punitive expedition into Servia *coûte que coûte*, although they well knew from the first that in pursuing this course they were running an

enormous risk of lighting the flames of a general European war.

For behind Servia stood the vast might of the Russian Empire. To suppose that the Russians would look on with folded arms while their kinsmen and co-religionists of Belgrade were bombarded into subservience to a German power would be to ignore the alphabet of Eastern politics. The Russians had followed with eyes of enthusiastic approval the victorious course of the Servian army in the recent Balkan war, and found in the Servian triumphs an assurance of the military qualities of the Slavonic race which was doubly welcome after the catastrophes of Port Arthur and Lyoyang. Sooner than see the independence of Servia undermined by its powerful German neighbour Russia was determined to fight. With her it was not a matter of close military calculation, for delay would have brought her military advantages. It was a matter of deep and overpowering national sentiment, of one of those great tidal waves of popular feeling to which the strongest government may be forced to succumb. And it was the vehemence and depth of this feeling in Russia which gave to the Servian question its peculiar gravity.

Now the possibility that Russia might be drawn into the fray, and if Russia, then France, was certainly present to the minds of the statesmen of Vienna and Berlin before the thunderbolt was launched at Servia. We cannot doubt that the hazards of the stroke, the chances of the gamble were eagerly and closely discussed with the aid of all the military prudence which could be summoned to the Council Board. Upon the whole the opinion seems to have prevailed that the Russians would be brought sullenly to acquiesce in a punitive expedition accompanied by a guarantee that the integrity of the Servian territory would not be impaired. The German Ambassador at St. Petersburg reported that the Russians would not fight and the German Ambassador in Vienna does not seem to have cared whether they fought or no. It was remembered how in 1909, when a similar Balkan crisis had arisen, the German Kaiser had threatened Russia with war and how the prospect of having to face the German army had been sufficient to bring the Tsar to heel. The stroke might be repeated now and with similar success, for it was to be apprehended that the Russians would reflect that if, in the matter of armament they were readier in 1914 than they were in 1909, they had still everything to gain by further delay. To

the war party in Austria, jealous of the growth of Servia, suspicious of Servian intrigue, maddened by the murders of Serajevo, the occasion seemed too good to be missed. With the help of the German Emperor and "his shining armour" Baron von Aehrenthal had "jumped" Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1909, and Count Berchtold, his less able successor at the helm, counted that the same old game of bluff bravely and promptly played might win a fresh dependency for the Habsburg crown.

Other considerations appeared to recommend the militant course in the Balkans. The German War Office had noted the fact that the Russian strategic railways to the German frontier would be complete in 1916, so that if a general war was inevitable, it would be more convenient for Germany that it should be brought on now when the Russian mobilization would be comparatively slow than at any date after 1916, when it would be considerably accelerated. The argument was double-edged. Russia would be less ready to fight, and Germany would be more capable of beating her if she did.

But of course there was a Power, which by throwing a featherweight of honest counsel into the balance could have turned the scales in favour of peace. That Power was Germany. We all know the Kaiser, the most amazing and amusing figure on the great stage of politics. The outlines of his character are familiar to everybody, for his whole life is spent in the full glare of publicity. We know his impulsiveness, his *naïveté*, his heady fits of wild passion, his spacious curiosity and quick grasp of detail, his portentous lack of humour and delicacy, his childish vanity and domineering will. A character so romantic, spontaneous, and robust, must always be a favourite with the British people, who, were his lunacies less formidable, would regard him as the most delectable burlesque of the age. There is a never-ending catalogue of his characteristic audacities. We have recently been informed, for instance, that on the occasion of her birthday he presents the Empress with twelve hats all chosen by himself, and we know at once, without waiting to be told, that a man who is capable of that may be reckless enough for anything.

But do not let us misjudge this strong, impulsive, ill-balanced character. The Kaiser, as you will remember, is half an Englishman, a grandson of Queen Victoria, and he has always been—this at least is my firm belief—friendly to this country and desirous of keeping the peace with us, so

far as peace might be compatible with the steady aggrandizement of Germany. But it would appear that his judgment was violently disturbed by the murder of the Archduke who was a close personal friend, and that the war party in Berlin, which was spoiling for a fight, snatched this opportunity to influence his will in the direction of warlike counsels to Austria. For it seems to be probable from one of Sir Maurice de Bunsen's letters that the violent Austrian note to Servia, which precipitated the crisis, was shown to the German Government before it was dispatched to Belgrade.[1]

Germany therefore was determined to back Austria in the struggle with Servia, even at the risk of a Russian war, and she was prepared to take this enormous risk by reason of her proud confidence in the superiority of the German army. She had only recently made huge additions to her military strength and equipment on the pretext of the Russian peril, and she was advised that a fortnight after mobilization she could dictate terms in Paris, so that long before the Russians had reached the waters of the Oder, they would be met by exultant armies fresh from the final destruction of France. Of English neutrality she may have felt fairly confident, believing as she did that this country was on the verge of civil war and knowing full well that a Liberal Government would only embark on martial enterprise at the last extremity. For these reasons then Germany and Austria preferred to bring on a general European war rather than concede a point in the diplomatic game to Servia.

And now let me invite your attention to the line of action pursued by the British Foreign Minister. Sir Edward Grey, who has saved the peace of Europe once before, made the most desperate, continuous and loyal efforts to save it now. He attempted to isolate the Servian problem. He suggested a meeting in London of the ambassadors of the four Powers not immediately concerned in order to arrange some formula which might be acceptable to Austria and Servia. Italy and France were ready, Russia approved, Germany alone declined, and on the rock of German refusal the project instantly foundered. Sir Edward was not to be deterred by this rebuff. He went so far as to give an assurance that if Germany would propound any scheme which it would be reasonable for Servia to accept,

[1] Dr. E. J. Dillon, a high authority, learns that the note was aggravated by the German Emperor before it went to Belgrade.—*Contemporary Review*, September, 1914.

and if Russia and France then declined to accept that scheme, Great Britain would have nothing more to do with Russia and France. Yet in spite of that handsome offer no suggestion came from Germany. Finally, when the sky was getting black with the impending cloud of war, Sir Edward made a remarkable proposal to the effect that if the crisis were once safely passed he would attempt to put forward proposals which would effectually guarantee the German Powers against any aggressive action on the part of Russia and France. And in order the more completely to exhibit the sedulous anxiety to preserve the peace which influenced the whole course of our diplomacy at this crisis, I will remind you that while Sir Edward Grey assured Russia and France that they were not entitled to count upon British assistance, he clearly intimated to Germany the likelihood that England would be drawn into a general European war. Could any course have been pursued more honest, more straight, more likely to keep the peace of Europe, if there had been any will to keep it in Vienna or Berlin?

You know what followed, the ultimatum of Germany to Russia who had mobilized her troops but had consented to demobilize if Servian independence were respected, and then after the briefest interval the ultimatum of Germany to France. An obscure Balkan problem, in which this country had no direct interest, had suddenly developed into a war which might affect our very existence as a nation.

No formal treaty or written engagement of any kind bound us to defend France from the Germans. But we were obliged, not by letter, not by any specified agreement, but in honour to protect the northern coast of France from an attack by the German Navy, inasmuch as by agreement with us the French had withdrawn their warships from the Channel to the Mediterranean in order that we might strengthen our fleet in Home waters. But beyond this debt of honour we were under no obligations to render armed assistance to France, and having once obtained from Germany a renunciation of her belligerent rights in the Channel—and to this she was prepared to consent—we might have preserved our neutrality without breach of faith. Neutrality under these terms might not have been the most glorious course of action, and in the long run might not have been the safest course of action, but war is so hellish a tragedy that no statesman is justified in embarking on it save on the clearest call of national duty.

The call came from Belgium, a pacific industrial people living on the north-eastern frontier of France, who in the last generation have contributed more to the sculpture, the poetry, and the historical and economic sciences of Europe than any of the smaller nations. The neutrality of this border state had been solemnly guaranteed as late as 1870 by Great Britain, Prussia, Austria, and France, and upon the threatened approach of hostilities it became necessary to know how far the pledge would be respected. To Sir Edward Grey's inquiry addressed to the two belligerents, the French answered that they would keep their word and the Germans answered that they would break it.

Now, were we also to be unfaithful to our pledge? Or so narrowly to construe our guarantee as to content ourselves with a verbal remonstrance? When Sir Edward Goschen, our ambassador at Berlin, visited the German Chancellor after presenting the British ultimatum, he found Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg in a great state of agitation. "Just for a word—'neutrality,' just for a scrap of paper Great Britain was going to make war on a kindred nation." A scrap of paper indeed! It was the plighted faith of our country. Could we have stood by in passive unhelpful acquiescence while the German Army carried havoc and destruction through a small, unoffending, heroic community whose neutrality we had pledged ourselves to protect? Should we ever have been able to look an honourable nation in the face after cowardice such as that? Was not the whole cause of civilization, of international morality and national honour bound up in the protection of the Belgians? National honour and national salvation also. Ever since the middle of the sixteenth century it has been a cardinal axiom of British policy to fend Antwerp against the predominant Power in Europe. It was chiefly to save Belgium from France that the Government of Queen Anne declared war upon Louis XIV, and in the great duel which lasted from 1793 to 1815, the main continental interest of this country, underlying all other occasions of quarrel, was the rescue of Belgium from the French and with it the assured predominance of the British Navy in the narrow seas. Our naval estimates are high enough now in all conscience, but to what crazy altitude would they not mount if the Germans were established in Antwerp and Ostend?

We go into this war with clean hands. It is not a war of our seeking. It is not a war of aggression. It is a war of

self-defence, waged in the interest of small states, of international good faith, and for the preservation of Europe against the aggressive designs of a militant autocracy. This war is out of all proportion to the wars of which history tells us, greater in the area which it covers, greater in the numbers engaged, greater in the sacrifices which it demands, and greater also in the issues which it will determine. And if Europe is to be freed once and for all from the evil domination of German, or rather Prussian, military ideals (for it is Prussia, not Germany, which is at the root of the evil), if a humaner feeling is to be breathed into politics, and the mad race of armaments is to be slackened, if not entirely ended, by general consent, we must see to it that Great Britain, which loves freedom and respects nationalities, shall have its due share in the final settlement. And if we are to exercise the share which properly belongs to us, it is necessary for us to imitate the conduct of our forefathers who, when they were faced with a similar problem during the war against Napoleon, determined to persevere until every enemy was driven across the Pyrenees.

And so, too, in the same spirit we must resolve that whatever may happen to France, even if Notre Dame be exploded into the air and the Louvre with all its priceless treasures be reduced to a mass of smouldering ashes, Great Britain shall persevere in the struggle with Germany until the fair fields of gallant France and the once rich and thriving plains of Belgium are delivered once and for all from the curse of the invader. That will require a great effort. The country has been asked for 500,000 men. I think that we shall want double that number, and I am confident that if the call for a million men goes out, a million men will be found to respond.

III.

The call goes out to German culture, Live, and work for the German idea all over the world.—ROHRBACH.

IT has been said that the tragedy of history consists not in the conflict of wrong with right but in conflict of right with right, and we doubt if any war has ever been waged among civilized states in which each of the combatants has not lodged an appeal with the moral conscience of mankind. Even in the struggle between the Northern and Southern States of America, when the northern states were battling for freedom against slavery, the moral issue was not altogether so plain as might appear. And so in the great and calamitous conflict which is now raging in Europe, we must not be surprised to hear that our enemies have an apology to offer the world, which is supported by a force of enthusiastic conviction, the sincerity of which is not open to doubt.

To the common folk of Germany this war originally seemed, or was represented to be, a necessary act of defence against the aggressive designs of the Tsar. We are told that when the news of the Russian mobilization against Austria was first spread in the capital of Prussia the populace of Berlin was seized with a sudden panic. They knew that Germany was pledged to defend Austria, they realized that Russia was about to attack their ally, and their imagination instantly framed a picture of the Fatherland invaded and destroyed by hordes of barbarous and ravaging Cossacks. In these early days of the crisis the spectre of Panslavism triumphing in its huge and hideous legions occupied almost the whole field of public attention. Russia was the enemy, and so overpowering was the sense of the Russian peril, that the man in the street thought of little else. It was hardly realized that a Russian war would inevitably produce a conflict with France, and that in order to accelerate success in the western theatre of operations the military powers in Berlin would take the preliminary step of crushing the entirely innocent and unoffending State of Belgium. I have a young German acquaintance, who was a

Rhodes scholar at my college in Oxford and was captured during one of the early skirmishes of the campaign. "I have not been able to make out," he said to an English officer, "why in the world we are at war with Belgium," and that must have been the feeling of a good number of Germans who were not initiated into the *arcana* of the general staff.

Nevertheless, quite apart from the ultimatum to Belgium, and with a full sense of the very reasonable apprehensions which undoubtedly prevailed in Germany with respect to the power of Russia, I do not wish to lessen the weight of censure which deservedly rests upon the statecraft of the German Powers in respect of the Servian question. If there be any justice in history, the action of the German and Austrian governments during the month of July, 1914, will stand out as one of the blackest pages in the long annals of human stupidity and recklessness. For let us admit to the fullest extent the legitimate sorrow and indignation of Austria at the foul murder of the Archduke. Let us even concede that Austria had ground for believing that a strong measure of correction might properly be applied to the Servians. Still the tone of the Austrian ultimatum was inexcusable, and we must further remember that the Servian reply to that ultimatum "already involved," in Sir Edward Grey's words, "the greatest humiliation that he had ever seen a county undergo," so that only a reckless disregard for consequences can explain the refusal of the German government to accept it as a basis for further parley.[1]

I will cite two little incidents from the past to enable you to understand more clearly the principles upon which German and Austrian policy are conducted and the spirit which Europe must now resolutely endeavour to eliminate from the conduct of its public affairs. Let me ask you to look back to the spring months of 1875. It was four years after the conclusion of the great war which brought about the downfall of the Second Empire in France and the consolidation of the German Federation under the headship of Prussia. Bismarck who had contrived the war and Von Moltke who had planned the campaign, came to the conclusion that France was repairing her military strength with inconvenient rapidity, and that a pretext should immediately be found for an attack calculated

[1] It would now appear from the recently published dispatches of Sir Maurice de Bunsen that but for Germany's precipitate declaration of war, Austria and Russia might have come to an agreement over the Servian question.

to break, beyond power of recuperation, the forces of their vanquished neighbour.

Inspired articles were communicated to the Press urging a second war with France, and the whole weight of the Prussian military party was thrown into the same scale. The crime against civilization was happily averted, and the scruples of the German Emperor, fortified by the strenuous appeals of the Tsar and Queen Victoria, overcame for a moment the counsels of brute force. But the incident serves to illustrate the continuing influence over Prussian statesmanship of the cynical maxim of Frederick the Great, that "he is a fool, and that nation is a fool, who having the power to strike his enemy unawares does not strike and strike his deadliest".

The second passage of history to which I would draw your attention is at once more recent and more strictly relevant to the present crisis. On 7 October, 1908, Europe was startled by the news that Austria had suddenly taken upon herself to annex the two Slavonic provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the administration of which had been entrusted to her by the Congress of Berlin thirty years before. The act was the work of Baron von Aehrenthal, "the Austrian Bismarck," a somewhat sinister figure, who has been convicted of mendacity and lies under strong suspicion of having been an accomplice in a remarkable series of forgeries, executed in the Austrian Embassy in Belgrade, and concocted to supply a *casus belli* with Servia. Now it was not unnatural that Austria, having been at the very considerable trouble and expense of governing these two fractious provinces for a generation should wish to annex them in perpetuity, but it was a flagrant violation of the Treaty of Berlin that this step should be taken without the consent of the Great Powers who in that great instrument had fashioned the political map of the Balkan peninsula. If treaties could be so torn up and flouted, what became of the public law of Europe, and what was the value of international combination? Russia mobilized her army, Great Britain protested in the name of public faith, but the German Powers triumphed. Upon a clear threat of war from Berlin, Russia resolved that she was not prepared to throw away the scabbard. The game of German bluff had succeeded. In a famous speech given in the Rathhaus at Vienna, the Emperor Wilhelm posed to the world as coming with "Nibelungen faithfulness and in shining armour" to the help of his ally in the hour of need. Such was the dress rehearsal of the tragedy which is

now being enacted. The German Powers have tried to repeat the bully's *coup*, and they have tried once too often.

We have no quarrel with the common people of Germany, who have too little voice in the government of their own affairs. Indeed, if we have a spark of imagination and human feeling in us, we cannot but pity them in the appalling calamities which Prussian statecraft has brought upon their undeserving heads. We do not challenge or attempt to diminish the just claims of Germany in the spheres of art, letters, science, and industry. We love German music, we revere German knowledge, we applaud the many fine and beautiful elements in German culture. We consider that whatever may be the changes in the weights and balances of the world, a great place will always be justly reserved for a nation, so brave, serious, and profound. But what we will no longer have, and intend, if strength be given us, to uproot from Europe, is the diabolical Prussian statecraft which has brought on this terrible and insane war. We protest against a Government which commits its policy to the control of a military caste, which piles up armaments that it may give the law to Europe, and ruthlessly disregards the liberties of its weaker neighbours. We stand also for the rights of the small nations, a cause which throughout our history we have defended in Europe and do not now propose to abandon. It was largely through our assistance that in the sixteenth century the Northern States of the Netherlands were enabled to repel the tyrannical power of Spain, and to form themselves into the famous Dutch Republic. And in defending the heroic Belgians against the far more formidable tyranny which has now invaded them, we are treading the old path of honour on which our ancestors have walked.

Further, by our entrance into this quarrel we hope to save from destruction our brilliant ally France, that ancient and polite civilization, the source of endless delight in the sphere of art and letters, and ever since the close of the eighteenth century the great liberating influence of the world in the domain of politics, our gallant antagonist for many centuries, and now, let us hope, our firm and faithful friend.

Do not for a moment hide from yourselves the fact that the struggle will be long and arduous. We are only prudent if we assume that it will demand the utmost measure of energy and sacrifice of which our race is capable. For consider the consequences of a great and crushing German victory in this

war. It would not only rivet the firm yoke of Prussian militarism with all its accompaniments of insolent force upon the Continent of Europe; it would involve the absorption into the Hohenzollern Empire of the German cantons of Switzerland, of Holland and Belgium, and most probably also of the coast of Picardy. We should have Germans at Rotterdam and Antwerp, at Calais and Boulogne, and Herr Krupp's monster guns controlling the narrow seas. Little imagination is required to paint the sequel. We know from the fate of Louvain what a German invasion means, and were this war to go against us, which it never can do if we are resolute, is there a village on our coast which would not with every dark and foggy night apprehend the landing of a German host armed to the teeth and ready for destruction?

Those who have followed the course of German diplomacy in recent years will have noted the close bonds of union between Germany and Turkey. Professor Schiemann, who publishes an annual and very able survey of German Foreign policy ("Deutschland und die grosse Politik"), brings out clearly the use which Germany intends to make of her Turkish ally in the event of a conflict with England. The Sultan, whose army is commanded by a German, largely officered by Germans, and equipped with German guns, is to raise a holy war, to seize Egypt and the Suez Canal, and to excite the Mahommedans of India to revolt against this country. I cannot conceal from myself the conviction that this oriental side of the Kaiser's policy, so strongly reminiscent of Napoleon, constitutes a real danger, and that if the war is marked by resounding German victories, Turkey will come in on the German side, with ulterior consequences which it is difficult to measure. For this reason among others I venture to think that we ought to be prepared to put a million men on the Continent.

At the same time is there not a serious moral and intellectual peril now arising from an exclusive absorption in the military and destructive side of this war? Of course our first duty now is to arm and drill our population as quickly and effectually as may be and to bring our men into the fighting line as soon as they can be trained for continental war. But we should also be thinking of the reconstruction of Europe and of some effectual means of preventing a recurrence of the hideous evil in which we are all to some extent accomplices. Is the tremendous issue of peace and war always to hang upon the secret action of Cabinets? Is it possible to strengthen the

concert of Europe, to give more effectual protection to the small States, to abate or terminate the evil race of armaments, to settle the political frontiers of the Continent in such a manner as to minimize the chance of future mischief, to elevate the political thinking of European Governments on to a higher and less material plane? Every war leaves a long surge of evil passions behind it, and we must not expect suddenly to create Utopia out of hell, but the degree to which the present evils will be outweighed by ultimate good will largely depend upon the development of a sound public opinion in this country as to the objects to be obtained at the end of the struggle.

Let our military success be as complete as it can be made so long as our political settlement is moderate, for if there is one lesson which the recent history of Europe enforces more plainly than another, it is the wisdom of a temperate use of victory and the folly of vindictive transfers of reluctant populations. The greatest moment in the stirring life of Bismarck was not the day of Sedan or of the foundation of the German Empire, but the moment in which, after the crushing victory of Sadowa, he prevented his impetuous master from marching on Vienna or from taking a yard of Austrian or Bavarian territory. For the union of Germany was alone made possible by that act of wise and strong moderation. Had the same spirit prevailed after the conclusion of the war with France, how different would have been the course of history for Germany and for Europe! The annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, recommended as a military necessity by Moltke, has brought Germany nothing but a legacy of evil, for it has led to the Franco-Russian alliance and indirectly therefore to the present war.

Besides the action of a wholesome and moderate public opinion at home, we may expect to see the temper of Europe improved by the manner in which Great Britain conducts this war both by land and sea. We may feel confident that our sailors and soldiers will be chivalrous, temperate, and disciplined, and that our record in this campaign will be stained with no such unhappy atrocities as those of which we have been reading. We at least will wage no war on women and children, on cathedrals and libraries, and whatever may be done by our enemies, it is for us to show the world how a nation of gentlemen conducts the most arduous and terrible business of life.

This is the anniversary of the day of Sedan. On this day

forty-four years ago the German Army trapped, surrounded, and vanquished the Army of Napoleon the Third. It may be that on this day, and perhaps at this very hour, our small band of valiant soldiers is contending desperately against an overpowering and vindictive foe. There is not a man in this company who would not gladly have fought in the trenches this day side by side with his fellow-countrymen. But though we cannot be with them in body, if there be anything in the doctrine of telepathy, a wave of affectionate and admiring sympathy, of encouragement and of hope, will pass from this great assemblage to our fighting line in France.

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